



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019

No. 53

## *House of Representatives*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madame Chair, I rise today in support of H.R. 7, the Paycheck Fairness Act—a modest, common-sense solution to the problem of pay inequity.

Equal pay for equal work is not only a core value of mine and others—it’s the law. Full implementation of that principle, however, remains elusive.

The Paycheck Fairness Act, which was first introduced in 1997 and passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support in 2009, is a serious initiative to realize the noble goal of true equality.

Among its provisions, this legislation would:

- Encourage businesses to rely on information about the market value of a position, industry standards, the duties of the job, and their budgets in order to set salaries, by prohibiting reliance on the prior salary history of prospective employees.
- Allow workers to share their personal salary information free from

retaliation, with commonsense expectations for FIR professionals.

- Improve research on the gender pay gap by instructing Department of Labor (DOL) to conduct studies and review available research and data to provide information on how to identify, correct, and eliminate illegal wage disparities.
- Assist the DOL in uncovering wage discrimination by requiring the collection of wage data from federal contractors, and direct the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to conduct a survey of available wage information and create a system of wage data collection.
- Support small businesses with technical assistance by providing support to all businesses to help them with their equal pay practices.

Momentum has continued to build, with more than 260 diverse organizations signing a letter in support of the bill, including the U.S. Women’s Chamber of Commerce, which represents business

associations and groups across the country, and the Main Street Alliance, a network of small business owners.

Madame Chair, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families, if the disparity in the median annual earning for women and men working full-time, year-round were closed, women would have over \$10,000 more in earnings each year. For millennial women, closing this gender wage gap could add up to more than \$1,000,000 in lost income over a career.

This not only impacts these women immensely, but also directs impacts those with families. Over 62 percent of two-parent, married households with children, have both parents employed, which means these families would add \$10,000 more to their family's total earnings per year.

Madame Chair, this bill makes good economic sense. Companies are recognizing the benefits and the power of women's increased economic participation, and some have already enacted policies similar to those outlined in the Paycheck Fairness Act. Companies like Staples and Amazon have ended inquiries into job applicants' salary histories to avoid importing prior pay discrimination into their wage setting process. These moves are directly aligned with the Paycheck Fairness Act's provision banning reliance on salary history in determining future pay, so that prior pay discrimination doesn't follow workers from job to job.

We have also seen a movement, spearheaded by investors, to motivate companies to disclose their pay data. After a gender pay shareholder proposal from the investment management firm Arjuna Capital, Citigroup publicly released the results of its pay equity review in 2018 covering a third of its global workforce, and another, more comprehensive review, in 2019. This data release went even further than the Paycheck Fairness Act's provisions, which would only require that companies give this summary information to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), not the public.

According to a 2017 report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research, the poverty rate for all working women would be cut in half if women were paid the same as men. The same study indicates the U.S. economy would have produced an additional \$512.6 billion in income if women had received equal pay for equal work. With 64 percent of mothers being the primary, sole, or co-breadwinners of their families, equal pay for women means America's families are better off.

Ensuring women have equal pay would have a significant positive impact on our families and our economy and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.